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**Baker-Polito Administration and City of Boston Announce Historic
Tuition-Free College Program**

*Tuition-Free Pilot Program launched for 2017 High School Graduates in Boston
through City-State Partnership.*

BOSTON – Governor Charlie Baker and Mayor Martin J. Walsh today launched a new college affordability pilot program for Boston high school graduates, which will enable low-income students to complete a four-year degree without having to pay tuition and mandatory fees.

The new pilot program, known as The Boston Bridge, will be open to all 2017 high school graduates who live in the City of Boston, including students from Boston Public School, charters and parochial schools.

The City of Boston and the Commonwealth together will cover students' tuition and fees, after taking into account federal Pell grants, from the time a student enters community college to when they graduate from a four-year public college or university.

The new tuition-free college program builds on the City of Boston's Tuition Free Community College initiative, and the state's Commonwealth Commitment, both launched in the spring of 2016. The City's Tuition Free Community College program currently provides free tuition to low-income BPS graduates who attend Bunker Hill Community College, Mass Bay Community College or Roxbury Community College.

The Commonwealth Commitment offers deeply discounted tuition and fees to Massachusetts residents who earn a Bachelors' degree at any public four-year institution after first earning an Associates' degree at any one of the state's community colleges, while maintaining a 3.0 grade point average and graduating within four-and-a-half years. Through this partnership, students from Boston who qualify to participate in the Commonwealth Commitment will not have to pay tuition or mandatory fees to earn their Bachelor's degrees.

"College affordability too often serves as a barrier for students in the Commonwealth seeking to complete a degree, and this program is intended to provide more opportunities for a quality education," **Governor Baker said.** "We are pleased to partner with the City of Boston on this important pilot and will keep pursuing ways, like the Commonwealth Commitment, to create a runway for all students to get a quality and affordable education that can unlock a bright future."

College students who go to school full-time in Massachusetts earn degrees at more than twice the rate of their peers who go part-time, according to the National Student Clearinghouse Center. Nationally, fewer than 20 percent of Pell-eligible college students earn a bachelor's degree within six years, and for first-generation college-goers, the number falls to 11 percent, according to the Pell Institute.

"This is an exciting partnership between the City of Boston and the Commonwealth that we hope will change the lives of many Boston high school graduates," **Lt. Governor Karyn Polito said.**

"Since launching our program in 2016, we have helped fifty Boston Public Schools graduates attend community college," **Mayor Walsh said.** "As we come up on the end of the second semester, 94% of those students are on track to finish the first year and 73% have earned transferable credits. We are also pleased that 16 of our students are from Madison Park Technical Vocational High School. This partnership means that a free bachelor's degree is within reach for all of Boston's low-income high school students."

Eligible students must meet federal Pell grant income standards to qualify for the tuition-free program, and must enroll full-time at either Bunker Hill Community College, Roxbury Community College, or Mass Bay Community College. They will be required to complete their associate's degree within two-and-a-half years, before transferring to a Massachusetts public college or state university.

"We hope this college affordability program will create a powerful incentive for more students to attend college full-time and complete on-time," **Education Secretary James Peyser said.** "The Baker-Polito Administration is very pleased to partner with

Mayor Walsh to offer this program for all low-income Boston high school graduates.”

“We built The Boston Bridge to take students all the way from high school to college commencement,” **said Commissioner of Higher Education Carlos Santiago.** “Our message to students is clear – If you commit the time and do the work, we’ll be beside you every step of the way to help you complete your college journey while avoiding burdensome debt.”

“Our core mission at the Boston Public Schools is closing opportunity and achievements gaps,” **Superintendent Tommy Chang said.** “Expanding this program will help ensure that this crucial effort extends well beyond our schools. By providing our most underserved students access to a debt-free college education, we are opening up doors that might have been closed to them due to the heavy financial burdens of getting a four-year degree.”

Students who enroll in The Boston Bridge must major in one of the Mass Transfer pathways, which ensures that credits earned in any community college are accepted at any public four-year institution.

While students attend community college, the City of Boston will cover the costs for tuition and mandatory fees, after taking into account Pell grants and discounts and credits from the Commonwealth Commitment program. Once a student earns an associate degree, they can transfer to a Massachusetts public college or university to complete their bachelor’s degree within two years. While they are enrolled in a public four-year institution, the City and the Commonwealth together will cover the costs for tuition and mandatory fees, excluding room and board.

Importantly, The Boston Bridge will also leverage the resources of the Success Boston College Completion Initiative, which supports students in getting to and through college by engaging a network of non-profit and business partners to coach, mentor, and employ thousands of first-generation college-goers. According to a recent study by Abt Associates, Success Boston has helped to raise the college completion rates of BPS graduates to over 50 percent.

Background:

City of Boston Tuition Free Community College (TFCC): In April 2016, Mayor Walsh’s office launched Tuition Free Community College for Boston Public School students. It is run through the Mayor’s Office of Workforce Development, with support from the City’s Neighborhood Jobs Trust.

Tuition Free Community College pays for up to three years of tuition and mandatory

fees for income-eligible graduates of Boston Public Schools. Students can attend Roxbury, Bunker Hill and Mass Bay community colleges.

As of March 2017, 50 students were enrolled in TFCC, with 94% completing their first semester of community college. Of that group, 73% earned college credits they can transfer to a four-year institution.

Commonwealth Commitment: In the spring of 2016, the Baker-Polito Administration launched Commonwealth Commitment, providing community college graduates who transfer to a state college or university discounts, rebates, and a freeze on all mandatory student charges. Students who complete their bachelors' degree within 4 1/2 years, while maintaining a 3.0 GPA, can see a savings of 40% or more on the typical sticker price for a four-year degree. As of April 2017, 80 students statewide are enrolled in Commonwealth Commitment.

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